The *Whole* Truth Out of Moscow

Stone Finds Russia's New Rulers Still Reluctant to Break With The Past

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STALINISM IS FAR FROM LIQUIDATED

The way home from Moscow has been agony for me. I have been reading furiously in Russian history and a little in Russian law and in past Communist controversy in an effort to evaluate what I have seen. The deepest questions of history and morality are raised by Russia, the terrible intermingling of good and evil in the evolution of society, history's endless riddle of whether-it-might-have-been-otherwise. My knowledge is inadequate, my ignorance is vast, my only credentials are that these conclusions represent what one man has seen and felt. I want to set them down as simply as I can before I pass on next week to my quite different experiences in Warsaw.

All sorts of advice has poured in on me from my friends, and from what I know my friends would say. All the inhibitions of expediency have been urged upon me, the inhibitions of the most worthy expediency—the fight for world peace. But I hate the morass into which one wanders when one begins to withhold the truth because the consequences might be bad—this is, indeed, the morass on which the Russian Communist State is built. I am not wise enough, and perhaps no one else is either, to know how much truth may wisely be given the public with our eye-droppers. I am only a reporter and one does not go to Moscow every day. This is what I think, not what I believe may wisely be told the reader. It may be wrong but it is not synthetic.

Not A Good Society

I feel like a swimmer underwater who must rise to the surface or his lungs will burst. Whatever the consequences, I have to say what I really feel after seeing the Soviet Union and carefully studying the statements of its leading officials. *This is not a good society and it is not led by honest men.*

No society is good in which men fear to think—much less speak—freely. I don't care how many tons of steel the Russians produce. It is not by the volume of its steel but by the character of the men it produces that a society must be judged. The kind of men Russia has produced is the kind which must always be wary, quick to sense any change in the wind and adjust to it, careful never to give way to the anguish of seeing injustice, always guarding one's tongue, alert to survive at whatever cost to one's neighbor.

This society is a paradise only for a rather stupid type of Communist party member, good but sharply limited. If you believe everything you read in the papers, lack imagination, and feel no need to think for yourself, you can be very happy in the Soviet Union and engage in useful devoted work. Or you can shut yourself up in a scientific laboratory and work on your own scientific problems and close your eyes and ears to what is going on outside or maybe even to your unlucky colleague next door. But for the journalist, the writer, the artist, the thinker, the man who cares deeply about the basic questions of humanity and history, the USSR has been a hermetically sealed prison, stifling in its atmosphere of complete, rigid and low level thought control. In this atmosphere has been bred a whole generation of sycophants, and yes-men, and writer-politicians.

The Soviet Press

It is impossible to imagine unless you have been there what it means to live in a country in which you do not know what is going on outside. The Soviet press is matchless for turgidity and obscurity; it prints only what the men at the top think people ought to know and it is written by uninspired hacks scared to add a thought of their own lest they get into trouble. I invite readers to check this for themselves by reading three authoritative expositions of the new line—*Pravda's* article of March 28, "Why Is The Cult of the Individual Alien to The Spirit of Marxism-Leninism?" (It can be found in full English translation in the March 30 issue of the now defunct Cominform weekly, "For A Lasting Peace, For A People's Democracy"); *Partiinaya Zhizn's* article of March 1956, "Wherein Is The Harm of The Cult of The Individual?" (English Text in the April 12 issue of the Soviet Information Bureau's *Daily Review of Soviet Press*); and *Kommunist's* article of March, 1956, "Fully Reestablish and Develop Leninist Standards of Party Life" (English text in the April 4 issue of the *Daily Review of Soviet Press*). They are as alike as if all three were the results of a party briefing at which the writers took down the words from on high in as verbatim a manner as possible. The same thoughts, the very same phrases, reappear in the same kind of repellent gibberish.

When you ask in Moscow where foreign papers can be purchased, the answer is that your book stall in the hotel carries all kinds of foreign papers. But when you watch the stall in the Metropol or the National or the Savoy (the three Intourist hotels) all you see are the East European and Chinese Communist party publications and that completely empty waste of paper, the *Moscow News*. I don't know what it was like when Anna Louise Strong edited it, but there is certainly no news in it today. I could not even buy Western Communist papers like *L'Humanite*. When I picked up a copy of the London *Daily Worker* in the Prague airport on the way back, I got the full flavor of what I had experienced in journalism. The London *Daily Worker* seemed like a bright, newsy, *real* newspaper after the Soviet press. In Warsaw, as I will tell next week, they have begun to sell Western "capitalist" papers. It will be a sign of real change when this happens in Moscow. It is indicative that a Communist intellectual with whom I discussed this problem in Eastern Europe admitted to me that he "couldn't live" without the *New York Times*. It was a con-

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fession and a tribute. Whatever the shortcomings of the Western press, there is no comparison between it and the Soviet press. Out of the variety of news and opinion in the Western press one can sift even the most unpopular truths. To read the Soviet press one has to become expert in decoding a peculiar kind of party language, developed to hide the facts rather than to make them public.

Why Was The Cominform Dissolved?

Again I invite readers to check this for themselves. I cite as an example the dissolution of the Cominform, a major news and political event of the Soviet world. The full text of the joint statement by the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Rumanian, Soviet, Czech and French parties explaining the dissolution may be found in the final, April 17, issue of the Cominform bulletin, which I bought in Moscow but which is on sale in New York. The front page also carries an article on the dissolution snappily entitled, "For The Further Development and Strengthening of the International Communist Movement." I challenge anyone to read these two pieces of drivel and find in them any real explanation of why the Cominform was dissolved.

This is why I am compelled to conclude that the present leaders of the Soviet Union are dishonest. I mean dishonest with their own people, not only with the non-party masses but with their own Communist party members. If they want to make a clean break with the Stalinist past, they can best demonstrate it by telling their people what they are doing and why. How can you have "democratic centralism" in the Communist party, i.e. free discussion within the limits of party discipline (what Lenin meant by the phrase) when the party members themselves aren't told what is going on?

Why Was Beria Killed?

I cite as a major example, the Beria business. No one outside a very small circle at the top really knows why Beria was executed. Those who study the tortuous, veiled and contradictory language of the various statements published in the Soviet press will find themselves completely confused. Only persons rendered permanently idiotic by complete submergence in party line literature will take at face value the charge that he was a British or imperialist agent. This is how Stalin operated; he never met an opponent on the ground of honest discussion; first slander and then the firing squad were his answers. And *everybody* turned out to be a foreign agent! It is a wonder the Soviet Union survived, since for 20 years its secret police apparatus was run by men who were each in his turn accused of being a foreign agent and executed.

Now, if the charge was meant seriously, why didn't the new rulers demonstrate their intention to operate differently by presenting their evidence against Beria in open court? Why was he tried secretly and so swiftly executed? Was not the treatment of Beria in the true Stalinist tradition? And nothing was more truly Stalinist than the obscure and slanderous verbiage of the various statements on Beria.

I cite as another major example, the attack on Stalin himself. Nobody yet knows just why and how it was decided to go so far in the denigration of Stalin. After his death, the press began to play him down. But in 1954 and again in 1955 his picture appeared with Lenin's on the front page of the November 7 issue of *Pravda*, celebrating the anniversary of the Revolution. Zhukov in Red Square paid tribute just last year to the party of "Marx-Engels-Lenin-*Stalin*." As recently as last December 21, *Pravda* published a 2,000 word article on the 76th anniversary of Stalin's birth, an article full of the most lavish praise of the dead dictator in Marxist theory and in practice, in industry and in agriculture. The language was that of the Stalin cult.

Why Was Stalin Denigrated?

What happened between the end of December and the 20th Party Congress in February? Indeed why did Krushchev confine himself to generalities about the "cult of leadership" in his report to the Congress on behalf of the Central Committee February 14—only to make a savage attack on Stalin at a secret session 11 days later, on February 25? Why was it secret? Why did Communist newspapermen leak the gist of this secret session deliberately to other newspapermen in Moscow? Why was the Soviet censor so "sticky" about passing these reports until after they had leaked from abroad? Why did Mikoyan open the attack on Stalin at the Congress in his own public speech? Why did Krushchev lag behind Mikoyan and then go so much further? Is there any truth in the speculation that one of the men named by Mikoyan as an innocent victim of Stalin was personally liquidated by Krushchev? Did Krushchev fear that he might have to do a crawl himself and therefore choose to swing over and lead the attack against Stalin in order to outflank his own enemies in the Central Committee? No one knows. Indeed it is amazing how little anyone knows of what really goes on in Moscow.

What one does see is that somehow the attack on Stalin has the same crass, crude air as Stalin's own attacks on his own victims. Stalin had a series of scapegoats on whom he blamed the abuses of his regime in his periodic relaxations. His successors act the same way. Their scapegoat was Beria and then Stalin himself. By blaming all the evils of the regime on the dead dictator, they may hope to increase their own popularity. But to blame the evils of Stalinism on Stalin is obviously inadequate. It is not merely that they were his accomplices; their cowardice is understandable. It is that Stalinism was the natural fruit of the whole spirit of the Communist movement. The wanton executions, the frameups, the unjust convictions and exiles—these would not have been possible except in a movement whose members had been taught not only to obey unquestioningly but to *hate*. The average Communist was prepared to believe anything about anyone who differed with him in the slightest; the liquidation of the opposition was not just a duty but a savage pleasure. And if "errors" were occasionally made, these were the unavoidable sacrifices of the revolution. This was the spirit the Communist movement bred. Stalin embodied that spirit. To change it one must do more than hang Stalin in effigy, or to defame him in self-serving panic as Krushchev is doing.

It Started With Leninism

Stalinism also grew naturally out of Leninism. "Back to Lenin" is a popular slogan in the Soviet Union today, as it is among those who have fled the Revolution since the war. Lenin personally was more humane and cultivated than Stalin; in the late 20's people still spoke rather freely in Moscow from what I have been able to learn. But Stalinism was the

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natural second generation to be expected after the revolution was made. In every great institution, the first generation of saints and zealots is followed by a second generation attracted largely to the new faith as a means of obtaining and exercising power. The symbols fanatics created out of zeal now become symbols to be manipulated by the shrewd and cynical; they carry on the Revolution or the Church but the spirit has begun to evaporate. This, too, happened in Russia.

But that is not the whole story. To go back and study it is to see that Stalinism followed naturally from Lenin's own peculiar brand of Marxism. Lenin emphasized not the economic determinism of Marxism but its hidden "idealism"—that is, its appeal to men to take their destinies in their own hands and change the world. Lenin believed that the revolution could not be brought about by the working class but only if conscious revolutionaries drawn from the old possessing classes *forced* the revolution on the working class from above, against their natural instincts.

Lenin Didn't Trust The Working Class

Those who think I exaggerate are invited to read or reread for themselves Lenin's famous pamphlet "What Is To Be Done?," particularly that famous passage which (in 1902, when it was written) already had the germ of the whole Bolshevik—as distinct from the Menshevik—movement. "The history of all countries," Lenin wrote, "shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strike to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophical, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. According to their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intellectuals. . . . The spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence our task is . . . to *divert* the working class movement from this spontaneous trade union striving . . . and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy."

In Lenin's view revolution was to be imposed on the workers and peasants from above. The instrument was to be a small, tightly knit, well disciplined, conspiratorial minority organized in a party governed inexorably by its central committee, i.e. by its leaders. Decisions once reached were to be carried out without question. The decision of the central committee was sacred; to go against it treason. Who ruled the central committee ruled the party, and through the party the proletariat. This was the dictatorship of the proletariat. The slightest deviation even in the realm of the most distant topics—metaphysics, for example—was feared by Lenin. He sought to create an absolutely monistic view of the universe to go with a monolithic party; he erected the Party (with capital P) into a God with the Central Committee as the governing hierarchy. The habits bred by such a movement, intolerant of the slightest deviation, ruthless with any critic, led naturally to all the abuses of Stalinism which Krushchev himself has disclosed. Changes in habit, changes in doctrine, changes in the very form of the State, are necessary if those evils are to be corrected.

Lenin's Roots in Russia's Past

I do not presume—in my ignorance—to say all this in criticism of Lenin. The more one studies Russian history the more one sees how deep were the roots of Leninism in Russian radical thinking of the Nineteenth century as well as in Czarist habits. Lenin was fashioned by the weight of many generations. Given the conditions of Russian life, it may be that only a man like Lenin leading a movement like the Bolshevik could have brought about the Revolution successfully. It may well be these evils were the inescapable obverse of the good Lenin created. Czarism was evil. Given Russian conditions I believe the fall of the Bolsheviks would very soon have given us a racist, Fascist, imperialist and aggressive Russia. But whether Lenin was right or wrong (and whether so complete a dictatorship was really necessary) is beside the point. The point is that the Revolution has succeeded; socialism in Russia is there to stay; capitalism will never be restored; even among the escapees the only major criticism is of collectivization. Russian industrialism, despite Russian sloveliness and that callous waste of men and manpower one feels in Russia, has advanced on giant boots thanks to economic planning. Now Krushchev, in revealing the extent to which the abuses had grown under Stalin, shows that these are not figments of hostile propaganda. ("Multiply all you have read abroad by ten," a Communist said to me, "and you will get the dimensions of Krushchev's revelations about Stalin"). The problem has been posed by the new regime itself. How is a repetition of these terrible evils to be avoided? How indeed are they to be wholly eliminated?

It is in seeking the answer to these questions that I found Russia and its leaders most disappointing. These are the very competent managers of a great industrial empire; their speeches at the 20th Congress show their grasp of concrete industrial problems. They get down to brass tacks in studying steel output or railroad management. But they do not show the same spirit at all in grappling with the evils they have themselves exposed. These socialist industrialists, these lifelong Marxists, drift off into vague mysticism and into personality. When a system breeds monsters, as they say their secret police system has bred monsters for 20 years, then something must be wrong with the system. But as yet I see no willingness on their part to admit this. If Yagoda, Yehzov and Beria were all monsters, should not the ordinary citizen be given greater protection against the police in the future, greater rights of his own? Should not the public be educated to understand the reason for these rights and their existence? Should not the press be encouraged to criticize when it suspects frameups? The questions which confront Russia today under communism are like those who confronted the framers of our own Constitution. Individual rights are no less, perhaps more, necessary under communism than under capitalism; the coercive power of the new State is greater. These questions are not yet even being discussed in Russia.

What Is Collective Leadership?

Instead we come across a lot of vague talk about "collective leadership." But Stalin as well as Lenin talked of collective leadership and its virtues. Lenin, by sheer intellectual superiority and fanatic drive, dominated his fellow members of the Central Committee; Stalin did so by fear. In both cases collective leadership boiled down to individual leadership. Lenin's

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was milder; Stalin's grew positively mad. But this was the reality behind the same phrases Krushchev now again uses.

And what does collective leadership mean? Again I urge the reader to examine the basic documents for himself. An 11-man Presidium may be just as wrong as a one-man dictator. *Pravda* said April 5 "Throughout its history the Party's policy was and remained a Leninist policy." *Pravda* says the Party's policy has always been "correct." (A revealing Bolshevik word; it implies an absolute standard of measurement, like a yardstick; how can this wooden mentality be reconciled with the rich, complex and dynamic views of a man like Marx?). But what sense does it make to say that the Party has always been correct when you admit that for the last 20 years of Stalin's life he used the Party as his vehicle for all kinds of injustices and abuses? Obviously the Party was incorrect when it allowed itself to be frightened into silence, acquiescence, collaboration and submission by Stalin. The Party and the Central Committee for these people are mystical concepts; the whole is different from its parts; the leaders may be rotten and the members cowardly but put them together and they are miraculously the bearers of the future! Instead of rights, guarantees, free discussion, Russia is told to repose faith in the Central Committee, that is in the 11-man Presidium, in "collective leadership."

What Is Marxism-Leninism?

The comrades (but not yet the general public) are told to speak freely but warned already (*Pravda,* April 5) not to go beyond the bounds of Marxism-Leninism. And what is Marxism-Leninism? Whatever the men at the top of the party say it is. When Stalin was alive, he decided what was Marxism-Leninism and woe betide those who disagreed! Now his old colleagues of the new Central Committee Presidium will decide. How can there be free speech, free journalism, free writing, free thinking in such an atmosphere? The speeches of the new leaders are wholly inadequate to the correction of the evils they have exposed. So long as there is only one party, and it has a monopoly of government and controls all expression, there cannot be freedom. Russia is strong enough, secure enough, to move away from the one party system. We have two parties which do not differ in essentials; they could have two parties, too. Their society is stable enough for stable politics. The kind of one party rule which may have been necessary to achieve the revolution has become a positive hindrance; this is the real lesson of the revelations about Stalin.

Krushchev Cruder Than Stalin

I came away from Russia with the strong conviction that Krushchev is more crude and vulgar than Stalin, and will if given the chance take over completely. I believe his colleagues have forced him into the attack on Stalin and talk of "collective leadership" to prevent a return to one-man rule. In the process they have intensified the ferment which began with Stalin's death and set in motion events whose momentum they may not be able to control. The new policies have opened Russia's windows on the West and given us a chance to resume contact with this huge and wonderful segment of humanity. In the interests of peace, and of peaceful change in Russia, we ought to strive to keep the windows open, and to help along the process which may some day carry Russia forward from the current relaxation to freer institutions. I believe not only her people but her rulers want peace; and I believe that given peace they will slowly liquidate Russia's terrible backwardness and unholy past.

But this process will not be helped by indulging in delusions, or by quickly forgiving and forgetting Stalinism in the belief that Russia has now fundamentally changed. Changes there are, and given the natural extremism of the Russian temperament, no one knows how much further they may go tomorrow. But we will not help the Russian people by letting this crowd of leaders soft-soap us; in any free country, after similar revelations, a whole new set of men would have been swept into power as earnest of real change. Nor will we help ourselves, and our power to fight for a better world and a better society, by joining hands with the poor deluded housebroken Communist parties of the West. They remain Russian puppets; they will jump back through the hoops as soon as they get new orders. Their members cannot be freed from intellectual bondage until the parties themselves have disintegrated. Nothing has yet happened in Russia to justify cooperation abroad between the independent Left and the Communists.

Next Week: Stone Finds Warsaw Outspoken and Rebellious

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